

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**historic name Amis, Rufus, House and Mill

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**street & number State Road 1400☒ not for publicationcity, town Virgilina☒ vicinitystate North Carolina code NCcounty Granvillecode 077zip code 24598**3. Classification**

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☐ building(s)  
☒ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

## Contributing

7  
1  
3  
11

## Noncontributing

       buildings  
       sites  
       structures  
       objects  
       Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Historic and Architectural Resources of GranvilleCounty, North CarolinaNumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the  
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined eligible for the National  
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register.
- ☐ removed from the National Register.
- ☐ other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic-single dwellingIndustry/Processing/Extraction-manufacturing facilityAgriculture/Subsistence

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic-single dwellingVacant/not in use**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival (house)Greek Revival (house)Other: vernacular (mill) industrial

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone (house and mill)walls wood (house)weatherboards (mill)roof metal (house and mill)other wood (house and mill)brick (house)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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The Rufus Amis House and Mill are visible to each other across cleared fields and a thin fringe of woods that rises up at the edge of Aaron's Creek. The mill is perched upon the steep southern bank of the creek, enframed to the north by its waters and to the east by a narrow branch that flows past the edge of the cleared fields down towards the house and its outbuildings. The race that still cuts in beneath the mill runs west and then south, past a frame former dwelling, terminating at the former dam and mill pond that form the property's western limits. The three-and-a-half story mill has only one companion in scale and size in the county and the strikingly finished, one-and-a-half-story, Gothic and Greek Revival style house also has but a single, local, stylistic mate. The stylish house is still intact and in good condition, and the enormous mill, though worn and abandoned, is sound; both have seen no significant changes over the years.

Many of the most popular elements of the Gothic Revival style adorn the exterior of the house. Its one-and-a-half-story, L-shaped frame is capped by six gables fringed with delicately sawn bargeboards. Board and batten siding climbs the heavy timbers of its walls, terminating in Gothic arches beneath the peaks of its gables, the roof of its altered wraparound porch and even the sills of its six-over-six and two-over-two windows. Pointed arches further crown some of its gable windows, a few of which are adorned with crossettes. Even the roof did not escape ornamentation originally; traces of hexagonal wooden shingles are visible beneath the present metal top.

Features common to the Greek, rather than the Gothic, Revival style finish the interior. Its mantels are of the simple post and lintel variety common in the county and its four-panel doors are set into fluted surrounds which are, at the parlor, crossetted. An unusual feature is the presence of not one but two boxed stairways, each leading to an unconnected upstairs room. L-shaped, the house basically conforms to a hall-parlor plan, with the boxed stairs climbing from each of its front rooms.

To the eastern side of the house ["A" on accompanying sketch map] are a half dozen outbuildings. Two are mortised and tenoned and contemporary with the house, a smokehouse [E] topped by a gabled vent and an icehouse [D], later transformed into a striphouse, which is raised on large stones. Both mirror the

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house in their use of board and batten siding. The other, later, early twentieth century, frame outbuildings are a privy [C], a barn [F], a chicken house [B] and a corn crib [G].

Following the private entrance lane north from the house, one passes the former mill pond and dam, the eastern edge of the mill race [I] and an abandoned, late nineteenth/early twentieth century, former dwelling [H]. Continuing up the lane as it turns east, paralleling the mill race, one skirts the southern elevation of the mill [J]. Rising three-and-a-half stories, the mill's mortised, tenoned and pegged timbers are hidden from outside view by weatherboards and a metal gambrel roof. They are still visible inside, however, along with the remains of equipment that once turned local grain and corn into flour, feed and meal.

The original underpinnings of the mill, including massive, tapered, fieldstone piers, remain in place at its north side facing the creek; the south elevation is supported by the bank into which it is built. A horizontal tub wheel, the crux of the mill's power system, is said to be hidden in the mud washed between the piers. The long, deep race that fed the wheel still cuts beneath these piers and the mill, terminating at the creek.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Agriculture

Period of Significance

1850s - 1937

Significant Dates

1850s

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

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The Rufus Amis House is one of only two surviving Gothic Revival dwellings in Granville County and a rare example of a style that largely bypassed mid-nineteenth domestic architecture in North Carolina. (See associated Property Type 2 - Greek Revival and Romantic Style Dwellings) Its companion mill also has but a single, comparably scaled, mid-nineteenth mate in the county and it is one of the largest surviving mills of its era in the eastern Piedmont. (See associated Property Type 5.A. - Commercial, Industrial, Institutional and Religious Buildings - Plantation Era) The outbuildings that survive near the house are reminders that those who ran the mill also farmed and evoke farm life in the last half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth. Both substantial mill and stylish dwelling are representative of the economic vibrancy of rural Granville County during the plantation and bright leaf tobacco eras. (See associated Historic Contexts 1 and 2 - The Plantation Era in Granville County, 1746-1865, and Bright Leaf Tobacco and Rural Granville County, 1866-1937)

The house and mill were built for Rufus Amis (1835-1903) and his wife, Elizabeth (1834-1900), probably shortly before the Civil War. Between 1853 and 1860 Amis acquired more than 1500 acres of land on Aaron's Creek, all of which may have been associated with his dwelling and milling enterprise. [Deed Book 17, Page 434 (1853) - 201 acres; Deed Book 20, Page 129 (1858) - 656 acres; Deed Book 21, Page 313 (1860) - 4 acres; Deed Book 21, Page 327 (1860) - 5 acres; Deed Book 21, Page 519 (1862 - recording the purchase of his mother Elizabeth's dower in 1859) - 666 acres] A successful miller and farmer, Amis owned 19 slaves housed in four slave houses at the taking of the 1860 federal census. The exterior Gothic Revival and interior Greek Revival style of the house, its heavy timber frame construction, Amis' tenure in 1860 in the district within which it stands and the dates when he acquired his large tracts of land along Aaron's Creek indicate that the house was built in the 1850s. Because of the mill's heavy timber frame construction, Amis's profession as a miller and an 1860 deed [Deed Book 21, Page 313] that makes reference to "Amis' Mills," it is thought the mill was raised during the same decade.

Amis' house, the exterior of which was built in a style rarely seen in the state, is clearly linked to the Gothic cottages popularized by the publications of New York architect Andrew Jackson Downing. Closer to home, it is similar in many

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details to the National Register-listed Thomas Capehart House, a cottage built in adjoining Vance County in the closing years of the 1860s and, in general style, to the Joseph B. Allen House in southern Granville County. The interior of the house conforms with the elements common to the Greek rather than Gothic Revival style in the county.

Sold by the family at the opening of the twentieth century [Deed Book 55, Page 459 (1902)], the house, mill, race and pond, and the accompanying woods and fields, were purchased by Thomas M. Talley in 1924 [Deed Book 83, Page 341], in whose family it remains. He farmed the property, and a second farm he owned to the south, and ran the mill with his son, Drewery. When Drewery entered military service in the early 1940s, Thomas abandoned the mill and it has remained dormant ever since.

The period of significance ends at 1937 because neither the farm nor the mill has achieved exceptional significance since that date. The area of significance logically linked with the grist mill, "Industry," has not been claimed because the industrial context for the mill is not developed in this nomination.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Hays, Francis B. Unpublished collection of 135 scrapbooks on Granville County history located at Richard H. Thornton Public Library, Oxford, N.C.

Granville County Deeds. Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, N.C.

Interview with occupants Rosa and Sue Talley, February, 1987.

United States Manuscript Censuses. Microfilm located at Richard H. Thornton Public Library, Oxford, N.C.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)  
has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings  
Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering  
Record # \_\_\_\_\_

☐ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Specify repository:

## 10. Geographical Data


Acreage of property approximately 24 acres


## UTM References

A

Zone Easting Northing

C

B  Zone Easting Northing

D  Zone Easting Northing

☐ y See continuation sheet

## Verbal Boundary Description

☒ See continuation sheet

## Boundary Justification

☒ See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marvin A. Brown/Architectural Historian & Patricia Esperon/Historian  
organization Granville County-Oxford Historic Survey date 8/18/87  
street & number P.O. Box 1556(State Historic Pres. Office) telephone 919-693-1491  
city or town Oxford state N.C. zip code 27565

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|   | Zone | Easting | Northing |   | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|------|---------|----------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | 17   | 702150  | 4044980  | F | 17   | 702120  | 4044650  |
| B | 17   | 701970  | 4045040  | G | 17   | 702110  | 4044560  |
| C | 17   | 701970  | 4044850  | H | 17   | 702220  | 4044560  |
| D | 17   | 701820  | 4044730  | I | 17   | 702240  | 4044790  |
| E | 17   | 701820  | 4044650  |   |      |         |          |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the point A: 17 702150 4044980 on the USGS polygon, where the northern bank of Aaron's Creek is intersected by the eastern bank of the branch of Aaron's Creek, continuing along the northern bank of Aaron's Creek as it angles slightly northwest approximately 500 feet to Point B: 17 701970 4045040 on the polygon where the former mill race running immediately below Aaron's Creek turns south. Continuing south in a straight line approximately 450 feet, along the western edge of the former mill race, to point C: 17 701970 4044850 on the polygon, where the former mill race meets Aaron's Creek as the creek turns west, being the site of the former mill dam. Following the northern bank of Aaron's Creek as it meanders in a southwesterly direction approximately 800 feet around the western border of the former mill pond site to point D: 17 701820 4044730 on the polygon, where Aaron's Creek turns west away from the former mill pond site. Continuing in a straight line due south along the western edge of the former mill pond site, approximately 200 feet to point E: 17 701820 4044650 on the polygon. Continuing due east in a straight line approximately 300 feet along the southern edge of the former mill pond site through the grove of trees to point F: 17 702120 4044650 on the polygon, at the edge of the farm clearing. Continuing in a straight line due south approximately 450 feet along the edge of the woods, to point G: 17 702110 4044560 on the polygon, where the tree line turns east. Continuing in a straight line due east, along the edge of the woods, approximately 350 feet to point H: 17 702220 4044560 on

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the polygon, where the tree line turns north. Continuing due north in a straight line approximately 500 feet along the edge of the woods, until the tree line intersects with the eastern bank of the branch of Aaron's Creek at point I: 17 702240 4044790 on the polygon. Continuing north along the eastern bank of the branch of Aaron's Creek approximately 950 feet to the point of origin.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Approximately 24 acres that have been a historic part of the property, maintain historic integrity, and convey the property's historic setting are being nominated for the National Register. The nominated area contains all the vital elements of the milling operation and farmstead including the dwelling, outbuildings, former mill race, former mill pond, and the only remaining cultivated fields that date from the property's period of significance. The remaining acreage on the property is now woodland, and is no longer used for farm production. Because this acreage has been substantially changed so that it no longer contributes to the historic integrity or historic significance of the property as a plantation era and bright leaf era farm, it is not included in the nomination.

The northern boundary of the nominated property from UTM points A to B includes the mill race and a farm clearing to its south and excludes woodland to its north. The western boundary from UTM points B to C includes the mill race and the farm clearing to its east and excludes property that falls outside of the owner's property line to its west; in the absence of tax maps or survey maps for this property that could accurately locate property lines, points on the USGS map that corresponded with the former mill race were chosen as the best alternative to delineating property lines. The remainder of the western and southwestern boundary from UTM points C to D, D to E, and E to F includes the site of the former mill pond and excludes woodland. The boundary marked by UTM points F to G, G to H, and H to I includes the cultivated field to the south of the house and excludes woodland. The remainder of the eastern boundary from UTM point I to the point of origin includes the farm clearing, dwelling house, outbuildings, and the branch of Aaron's Creek to its west and excludes woodland to its east.

Contributing Buildings:

- A- Rufus Amis House
- C- Early 20th century frame privy
- D- Mid nineteenth century, mortise and tenon, ice house
- E- Mid nineteenth century, mortise and tenon smokehouse
- F- Early 20th century frame barn
- H- Late 19th/early 20th century former frame dwelling
- J- Rufus Amis Mill

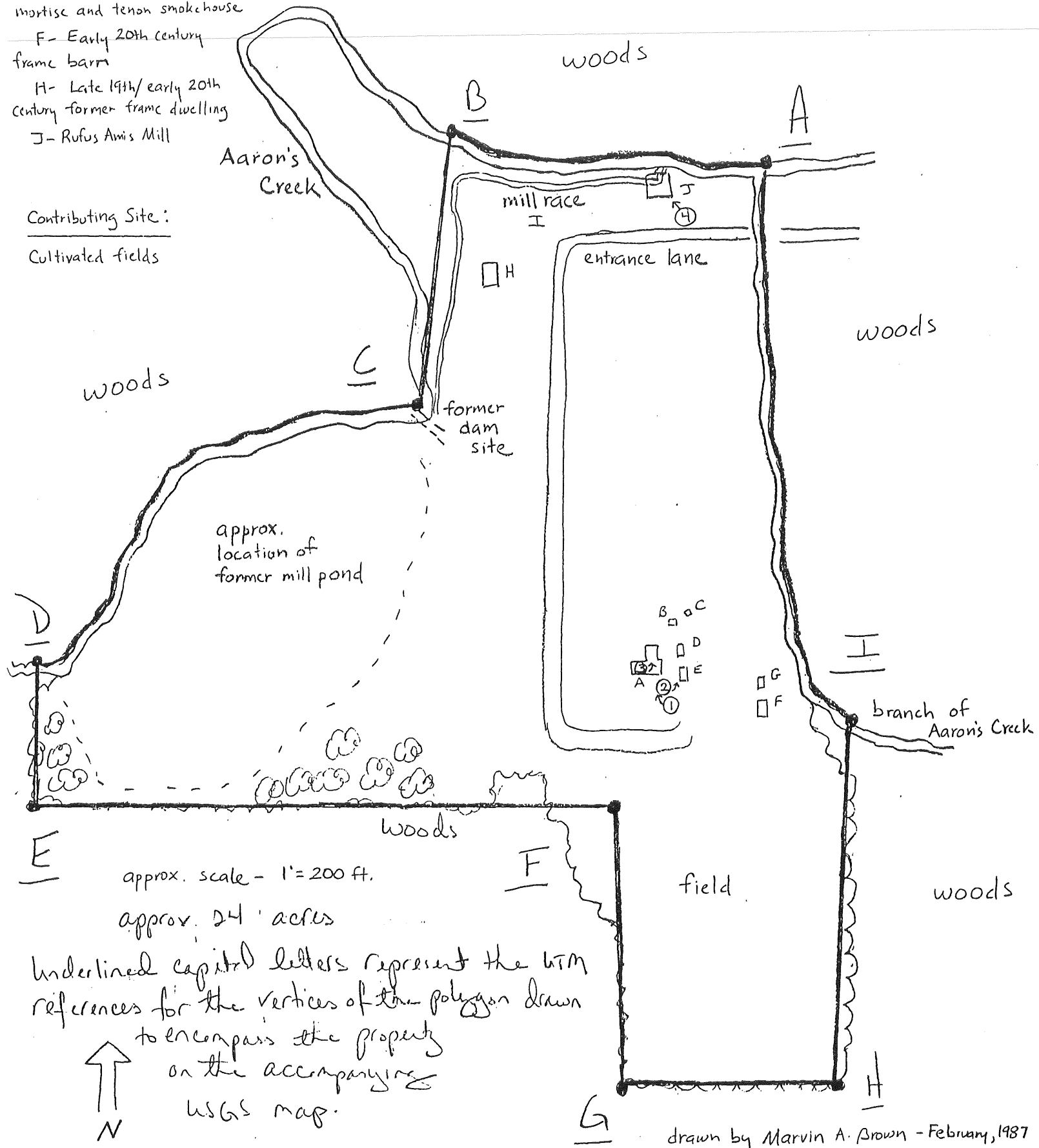
Contributing Structures:

- B- Early 20th century frame chicken house
- G- Early 20th century frame corn crib
- I- Former mill race

RUFUS AMIS  
HOUSE AND MILL  
Granville County, NC

Contributing Site:

Cultivated fields





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Granville County, NC

## BOUNDARY CLARIFICATION/AMENDMENT

When the National Register nomination for the Rufus Amis House and Mill was prepared as part of the Granville County multiple property listing in 1987, the boundaries were devised without the benefit of tax maps or plats because none was available. Approximate distances and directions were given verbally and graphically based upon site visits, verbal information from property owners regarding property line locations, and examination of USGS maps.

When the parcel containing the Rufus Amis House and Mill was placed on the real estate market recently, a survey by a registered surveyor was prepared. A comparison of the nomination site map and the recent survey reveals that the nomination boundaries are incorrect, apparently due to an error in locating the mill pond when the nomination was prepared. As a result of the boundaries having been drawn incorrectly, the acreage also was calculated in error.

The purpose of this amendment is to correct the verbal boundary description, verbal boundary justification, UTM's, and resource count. This clarification of the boundaries does not encompass any additional resources. In the course of preparing the recent survey, however, it was discovered that one of the contributing structures, an early twentieth-century frame chicken house cited as "B" in the original nomination's inventory list and site map, has been destroyed. Thus, the amended resource count should be as follows:

7 contributing buildings

1 contributing site

2 contributing structures

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated property are shown by the bold line on the accompanying survey map prepared by Ben L. Bryan, P.A. for The Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina, Inc., October 22, 1992 (file no. 1992231), drawn at a scale of 1" = 200'.

Verbal Boundary Justification

Approximately 32.65 acres of the property encompassing the Rufus Amis House and Mill maintain historic integrity and convey the property's historic setting. The nominated area contains all the vital elements of the milling operation and farmstead including the dwelling, outbuildings, former mill race, former mill pond, and the only remaining cultivated fields that date from the property's period of significance. The remaining acreage on the property is now woodland and is no longer used for farm production. Because this acreage has been substantially changed so that it no longer contributes

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Granville County, NC

to the historic integrity or historic significance of the property as a plantation era and bright leaf era farm, it is not included in the nomination.

Acreage: 32.65 acres

UTM References

1. 17:701940/4045040
2. 17:702200/4044970
3. 17:702240/4044480
4. 17:701860/4044440

State Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant statewide and locally.

William S. Pin

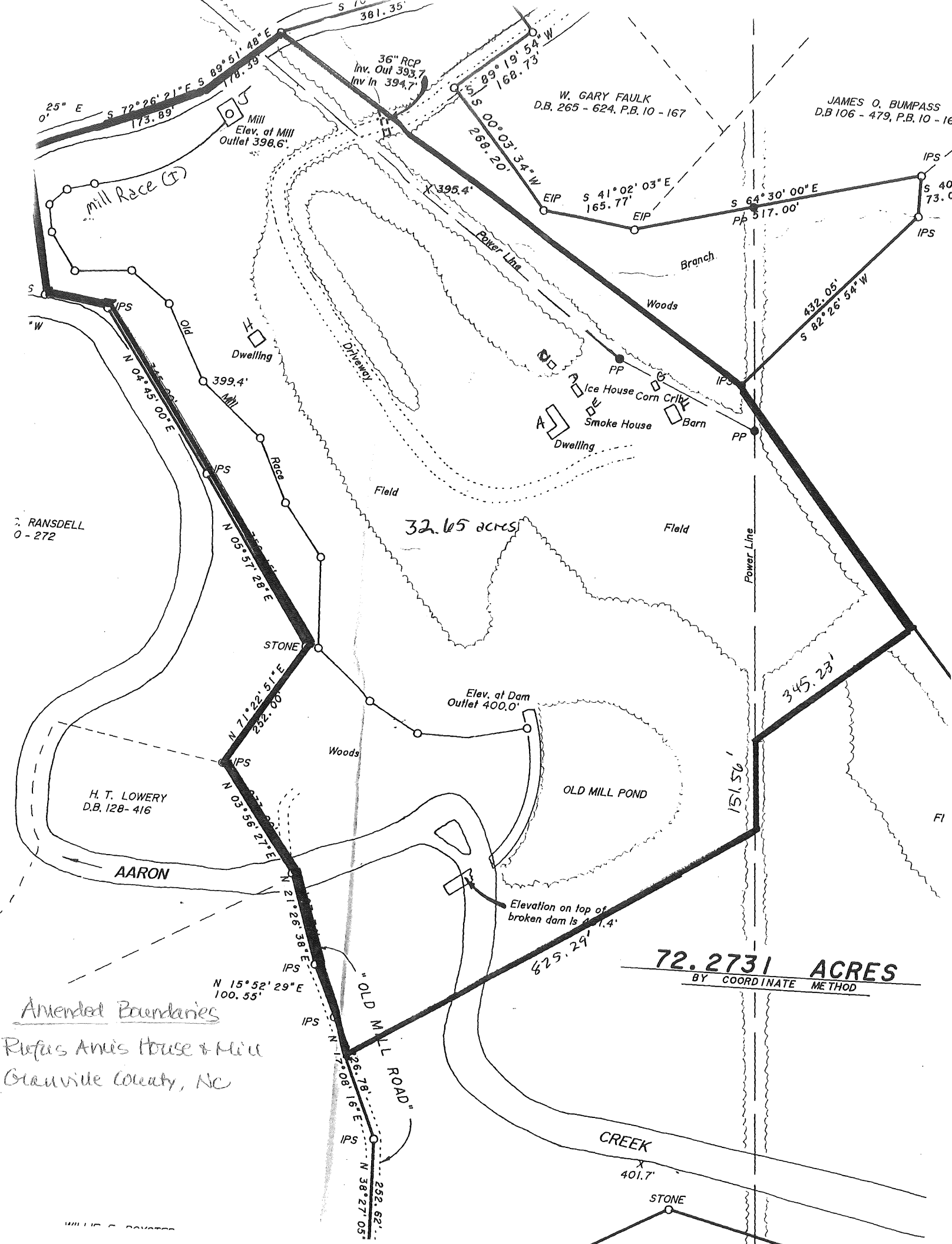
5-27-97

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

NC State Historic Preservation Officer

State Agency



Contributing Buildings:

- A- Rufus Amis House
- C- Early 20th century frame privy
- D- Mid nineteenth century, mortise and tenon, ice house
- E- Mid nineteenth century, mortise and tenon smokehouse
- F- Early 20th century frame barn
- H- Late 19th/early 20th century former frame dwelling
- J- Rufus Amis Mill

Contributing Structures:

- B- Early 20th century frame chicken house
- G- Early 20th century frame corncrib
- I- Former mill race

RUFUS AMIS  
HOUSE AND MILL  
Granville County, NC

Boundaries of Original  
Nomination

Contributing Site:

Cultivated fields

